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W. T. Sedgwick.

WILLIAM THOMPSON SEDGWICK, 1855-1921

Professor Sedgwick's name has appeared on the title page of THE JOURNAL OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES ever since the Journal was founded in 1904, and it is with deep regret that we here record his death on Jan. 25, 1921.

William Thompson Sedgwick was born of old New England stock at West Hartford, Conn., Dec. 29, 1855. When 26 years old he married Mary K. Rice of New Haven. He received degrees at Yale (S. B.), and at Johns Hopkins (Ph. D.), where he worked in the department of physiology with Prof. H. N. Martin. In 1883 he went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston where he remained in active service as head of the Department of Biology and Public Health to the end of his life.

His principal books are: in coöperation with Professor E. B. Wilson, a "Text Book of General Biology" (1886), one of the first books to make clear to the beginning student the fundamental resemblances of all living things; "The Principles of Sanitary Science" (1902), an illuminating discussion of certain phases of public health work; The Human Mechanism (with Dr. Theodore Hough) and, in coöperation with Prof. H. W. Tyler, a "Short History of Science" (1917), the notable outcome of a life-long interest in the history of science and the biographies of scientific men. Besides these he published scores of articles and public addresses—in which he was a master—and participated largely in scientific administration and organization in the state of Massachusetts and throughout the country. His truly amazing activity and versatility were among his most striking characteristics. While recognizing clearly the danger of diffuseness in others, his own interest in different fields was so keen and his sense of public duty so compelling that he frequently found it difficult to deny himself to worthy causes outside his daily path. The influence that he exerted in this way in his community and the amount that he accomplished were far beyond the capacity of the ordinary person, and mark the measure of the man.

Few men in this country have had so great a share as Sedgwick in the development of bacteriology and public health. He was a pioneer in the introduction of bacteriologic ideas into the United States and in their application to public health problems. Although not himself a laboratory worker he had the far rarer gift of inspiring in others a love for science and for scientific investigation. The number of pupils in his department was never large, averaging hardly three or four graduates a year, but few American teachers of his generation could point to so many pupils doing productive work in so many different fields. The present professor of sanitary engineering at Harvard, of public health at Yale, of protozoology at Columbia, of physiology at Cincinnati and at Virginia, and many others received their early training and their inspiration in Sedgwick's laboratory. In 1906, Sedgwick's pupils on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his doctorate published a volume of "Biological Studies" written especially to do him honor. At the annual meetings of the American Public Health Association it has been the custom for a number of years for Sedgwick's graduates to gather in friendly conference and send him a telegram of greeting. It is perhaps significant that from no other single educational institution—had the attempt been made—could have been mustered so many public health workers, often numbering between thirty and forty, as acknowledged their loyalty to Sedgwick and sent their greetings to the "Chief."

There was more than professional fealty and admiration in the feeling of all of Sedgwick's pupils for their master. He was a friend to whom they could always appeal for advice and counsel, and was himself always watchful of their needs and desires. He followed his pupils' careers with the most careful attention and never hesitated to use his great influence to further their best interests. Always intolerant of intellectual slackness and never mistaking interest for ability, once his confidence was obtained he was untiring in his support. Sedgwick's unusual success in "placing" the graduates of his laboratory was largely due to the deep personal interest he took in each individual and to his shrewd judgment of capabilities and resources which such friendly relations made possible.

It is not as a student, not as an investigator, but as a great teacher, a great publicist, a potent shaper of the lives of young men and above all as a lover of his fellows, that Professor Sedgwick has impressed himself on his time and on hundreds of his contemporaries who will do the best they can to hand on the torch.

E. O. J.